

Appl. No.: 09/478,112

Patent
Attorney Docket: EPI-027 US
7008122001**Amendments to the Claims**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this application.

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

making at least one digital facility available from a source to clients via an electronic communication medium;

associating with at least one of the clients a preference information that reflects one or more preferences of the client;

associating with at least one of the clients an access permission that enables the client to access at least one of the digital facilities;

associating with at least one of the clients a grant permission that enables the client to give to another client a user permission with respect to at least one of the digital facilities, in which the user permission with respect to at least one of the digital facilities is determined by a combination of an individual permission and a company permission;

creating a client profile for at least one of the clients based on the preference information and the permission information associated with the client; and

managing relationships that are defined between clients via the electronic communication medium with respect to the digital facility based on the profiles of the clients.

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2. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 in which the user permission that is granted to another client comprises a perform permission.
3. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 in which the user permission that is granted to another client comprises a grant permission.
4. (Original) The method of claim 1 in which the digital facility comprises data.
5. (Original) The method of claim 1 in which the digital facility comprises a service.
6. (Original) The method of claim 1 in which the source comprises a web server.
7. (Original) The method of claim 1 in which the clients comprise individuals using web browsers.
8. (Original) The method of claim 1 in which the clients are employees of companies.
9. (Original) The method of claim 1 in which the electronic communication medium comprises the internet.
10. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 in which the client can give another client both perform permission and grant permission.
11. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 in which the digital facility comprises an application program, and the application defines permissions grantable to clients.
12. (Canceled).

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13. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1 in which the user permission comprises an aggregate of permissions.

14. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 13 in which the aggregate permissions of the user permission include fundamental permissions that have arguments of a common type.

15. (Canceled).

16. (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium storing a software program that is capable of configuring a machine to perform a process comprising:

making at least one digital facility available from a source to clients via an electronic communication medium;

associating with at least one of the clients a preference information that reflects one or more preferences of the client;

associating with at least one of the clients an access permission that enables the client to access at least one of the digital facilities;

associating with at least one of the clients a grant permission that enables the client to give to another client a user permission with respect to at least one of the digital facilities, in which the user permission with respect to at least one of the digital facilities is determined by a combination of an individual permission and a company permission;

creating a client profile for each of the clients, based on the preference information and the permission information associated with the client; and

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managing relationships that are defined between clients via the electronic communication medium with respect to the digital facility based on the profiles of the clients.

17. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising a computer readable medium storing a computer program, the computer program comprising:

computer instructions for making at least one digital facility available from a source to users via an electronic communication medium;

computer instructions for associating with at least one of the users a preference information that reflects one or more preferences of the user;

computer instructions for associating with at least one of the users an access permission that enables the user to access at least one of the digital facilities;

computer instructions for associating with at least one of the users a grant permission that enables the user to give to another user a permission with respect at least one of the digital facilities, the access permission or the grant permission with respect to at least one of the digital facilities is determined by a combination of an individual permission and a company permission;

computer instructions for creating a user profile for each of the users, based on the preference information and the permission information associated with the user; and

computer instructions for managing relationships that are defined between users via the electronic communication medium with respect to the digital facility based on the profiles of the users.

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18. (Previously Presented) An apparatus comprising:

a source of digital facilities;

an electronic communication medium coupled between the source and users to make at least one of the digital facilities available to the users; and

storage means containing user profiles for each of the users, said user profile of each user comprising:

preference information reflecting one or more preferences of the user with respect to at least one of the digital facilities;

access information regarding the power of the user to access at least one of the digital facilities; and

grant information regarding the power of the user to grant a permission to another user with respect to at least one of the digital facilities, the grant permission with respect to at least one of the digital facilities determined by a combination of an individual permission and a company permission.

19. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

making business information of a portal-providing company available to individuals using a web server and web browsers;

associating with at least one of the individuals a preference information that reflects one or more preferences of the client with respect to the business information;

associating with at least one of the individuals an access permission that enables the individual to access the business information;

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associating with at least one of the individuals a grant permission that enables the individual to give to another individual a permission with respect to the business information;

authorizing at least a first individual to create an individual profile for a second individual, based on the preference information, access permission information, and grant permission information associated with the second individual; and

automatically allowing the first individual to manage one or more relationships that are defined between ~~of~~ the second individual with other individuals, via the electronic communication medium with respect to the digital facility, with the individual profile of the second individual.

20. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

providing a web site;

using the web site, interacting with web browsers of users;

in response to a request from a user to the web site, determining if the user has permission to have the request served in accordance with permission information contained in a user profile of the user;

enabling, in accordance with permission information contained in a granting user's user profile, one of the users to grant to another of the users selectively either only a permission to have a particular type of request served, only a permission to grant other users the ability to grant permissions, or both;

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authorizing at least one user to create a user profile for another user, the user profile including permission information and preference information for the user; and automatically making the user who creates the user profile for the other user a relationship manager of defined relationships of the other user with the profile of the other user.

21. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

maintaining a database of information that associates each user of a digital facility available from a source with preference information that define preferences of the user with respect to the digital facility, and permissions that define the rights of the user to access the digital facility or to grant to other users the rights with respect to the digital facility, or both;

determining the permissions by a combination of an individual permission and a company permission;

creating user profiles for each of the users in the database, each user profile containing the preference, access and grant permission information of the corresponding user;

defining relationships between users based on the user profiles; and enabling a user who has the permission to do so, to manage defined relationships associated with the user by altering the profile for the user.

22. (Canceled).

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23. (Original) The method of claim 21 in which the permission information is stored as user profiles in the database.

24. (Original) The method of claim 21 in which the permissions comprise cascading permissions.

25. (Original) The method of claim 21 in which the users belong to entities and the database also stores information about permissions that define rights of all of the users who belong to a given one of the entities.

26. (Original) The method of claim 21 in which the database also stores information about aggregate permissions that comprise predefined sets of individual permissions.

27. (Previously Presented) A method comprising:

making at least one digital facility available from a source to users via an electronic communication medium;

maintaining a database of user profiles that define preferences of users and companies with respect to the digital facility and permissions of users and companies to access the digital facility;

authorizing at least one user to create user profiles for other users;

defining relationships between users based on the user profiles; and

automatically making a user who creates a user profile for another user or for a company a relationship manager of the other user or the company.